

Jefferson Hotel  
NE. corner of West Main and  
North Jefferson Sts.  
Richmond  
Virginia

HABS NO. VA-840

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

## JEFFERSON HOTEL

Location: Northeast corner of intersection of West Main Street and North Jefferson Street. Bounded by West Main Street, North Jefferson Street, West Franklin Street and North Adams Street, Richmond, Virginia.

Present Owner: Jefferson Hotel Corporation, 104 West Main Street, Richmond, Virginia

Present Occupant: Hotel guests and club members

Present Use: Hotel and club

Statement of Significance: The Jefferson Hotel is one of the nation's outstanding examples of late-nineteenth century eclectic architecture and was designed by the well-known firm of Carrere and Hastings, architects of the Ponce De Leon Hotel in St. Augustine, Florida. In many ways it fulfilled the command of its patron, Major Lewis Ginter, to the architects to provide Richmond with the finest hotel in America. Aside from its architectural merit, the hotel as originally completed contained many advanced technological devices such as service telephones, complete electrical lighting, complete central steam-heating, and both hot and cold running water for each of its 342 guest rooms. It should be noted that among the fine appointments still contained in the building are an exceptional collection of late-nineteenth century academic paintings as well as the famous life-size marble statue of Thomas Jefferson by Richmond sculptor Edward V. Valentine. The planning and circulation of the hotel were well thought out to serve the hotel's various functions. There were three principal entrances: the Franklin Street entrance, known as the "Ladies Entrance", for those attending social functions; the covered side entrance used by carriages; and the Main Street entrance quite properly meant for businessmen. The Carrere and Hastings-designed public rooms in the upper or north end, now part of the private Rotunda Club, survive generally intact and display a diverse range of styles.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Completed 1895.
2. Architect: Carrere and Hastings of New York City designed the original building. J. Kevan Peebles designed the Main Street section after the fire of 1901.

3. Original and subsequent owners: The following is a chain of title to the land on which the structure was built.

1895 Jefferson Hotel opened for business on land purchased by Major Lewis Ginter.

1905 Hotel sold by the heirs of Major Lewis Ginter to the Jefferson Realty Corporation.

1943 Hotel sold by the Jefferson Realty Corporation to Colonel Charles H. Consolvo.

1949 Hotel purchased by the Cavalier-Jefferson Corporation, the present owner.

1957 Cavalier-Jefferson Corporation leased the northern or Franklin Street section of the hotel to the Rotunda Club.

4. Original plans and construction: None.

5. Alterations and additions: The overall appearance of the Jefferson Hotel is little changed from the original structure. The most basic change was that following the fire of 1901 when the wings at the southern end were constructed to run north-south rather than east-west. Considerable modernization has taken place over the years, including the addition of private baths.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Throughout its early history the Jefferson Hotel was the only place to stay for any important person visiting Richmond. Notable guests included Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, General John J. Pershing, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Charles A. Lindbergh, William McKinley, and Calvin Coolidge. The Jefferson Hotel has also been the scene of many important Richmond social events. At the present time it has been included on the Virginia Landmarks Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: Photographs of the original building and its appearance during the 1901 fire may be found in Arts in Virginia, vol. 5 (Fall, 1964). Other early photographs may be found in the picture collection of the Valentine Museum and in the Virginia State Chamber of Commerce, Richmond, Virginia.

2. Primary and unpublished sources: None.

3. Secondary and published sources:

a. Magazines:

Arts In Virginia, vol. 5 (Fall, 1961).

Commonwealth, February 1951, March 1951, February 1955.

b. Newspapers:

Richmond Dispatch, 31 March 1901.

Richmond News Leader, 4 April 1938, 7 April 1949, 7 May 1957, 11 April 1958.

Richmond Times, 12 March 1893, 27 October 1895.

Richmond Times-Dispatch, 15 May 1949, 4 October 1964.

Prepared by Tucker H. Hill  
Architectural Historian  
September 11, 1969

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Although partially destroyed by fire in 1901, the Jefferson's original flavor as seen on the north (Franklin Street facade) gains in its eclectic feeling by the Edwardian "grandeur" of architect John Peebles' rebuilding of the south two-thirds of the structure in 1905. The best exterior views are still the Franklin Street facade designed by Carrere and Hastings which blends well with the remaining residential qualities of the street. This facade, when viewed from directly across the street, has a symmetrical build-up of low wings, loggia, belvedere towers and clock towers whose interest is heightened by excellent Renaissance detailing. The central loggia defines the outward bounds of the recessed porch between the two belvedere towers and sets up a Mannerist theme of the systematic progression of solid forms to a central void. When viewed from a position further up or down Franklin Street, however, this loggia ceases to be as effective and the soaring towers and shifting levels intensify a new asymmetrical effect.

The Colony Club in the basement on the Franklin Street side, the Rotunda Club above it, and the Engineers Club in the Main Street wing have altered and re-arranged their areas, but the Rotunda Club, in the northern or upper end of the interior, which includes the Palm Room with its famous statue of Mr. Jefferson, retains its 1890's flavor. The Rotunda or main lobby on the south or lower half, however, was radically altered in style by Peebles after the fire. Originally, a large skylight supported by

slender iron columns illuminated the Rotunda, providing a contrast to the broad arcade directly behind the ironwork. Peebles retained the mezzanine format around the large open space but handled it differently by using massive columns papered to imitate marble; it made the skylight (now blocked) smaller. The long north-south axis, created originally by placing a stair in the north end of the lobby which led into the Palm Room, was enhanced after the 1901 fire by making it much wider. Unfortunately the opening between the upper and lower parts of the hotel was closed when the Rotunda Club leased the upper portion, and the only remaining link between the two areas is a long hall, lined with meeting rooms along the west (Jefferson Street) side.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 349 feet from Franklin down to Main Street along Jefferson Street (22 bays); approximately 140 feet width along Franklin Street (nine bays).

The hotel is located on a grade running from Franklin Street to Main Street, an overall drop of approximately seventeen feet, causing the basement story on the north to become the first story on the south. The north front is broken up into separate but related blocks of towers and lower wings; the south two-thirds is much more solidified, consisting of an eight-story, U-shaped mass surrounding the two-story central lobby.

2. Foundations: Masonry, random-laid stone with some brick supports.

3. Wall construction: Brick veneer over probable brick interior walls; floors probably supported by iron beams; terra cotta and some marble used on exterior and interior wall surfaces.

4. Chimneys: The chimneys for the most part have been incorporated into the design, being set into the four towers on the Franklin Street front and hidden by the high roof on the Main Street front. They have rectangular brick stacks with simple capping. On the east front, a tall round brick smokestack rises from the boiler room extension.

5. Roof:

Shape, covering: Roof designs vary from low hipped tower and wing roofs on the north to flat, graded roof on the south end; visible roof covered by asphalt shingles.

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6. Facade Design:

- a. North (Franklin Street) facade: This is the original Italianate design of Carrere and Hastings and consists of a central four-story unit dominated by a two-story loggia on the two middle levels. The flanking six-story towers with belvederes on the top story are in turn flanked by two three-story wings with low hipped roofs, set back one window width from the central design. Except for the terra cotta and stone ornament, the cream-colored brick is the principal surface material being used on the rustication on the first story and as a plain surface above. The three-bay center section noted earlier has a central entrance on the first level with matching windows to either side. The flat moldings on the jambs rise to volutes with fruit swags and a central panel filled with leaf patterns in spirals. These volutes support the three slightly projecting balustraded balconies of the three-arched loggia above, which screens the porch behind it. The arcade, with its double columns in the two center arch supports, is composed of unfluted Corinthian columns and plain frieze and cornice from which spring the arches. The interior porch wall reflects this arcade design in relief. The flanking six-story towers have a rather plain window design on the first rusticated level, being ornamented by a flat arch and keystone motif, identical to all other windows on this front with the exception of the three bays under the central loggia. The combined second and third floor window treatment under the towers enhances the importance of these levels that frame the loggia. The main opening on the second story is in a modified di-style in antis motif with a small balustraded balcony in front and an entablature above, upon which rests the third-story window. Elaborate shields with the Jefferson's monogram topped by lion's heads flank this third-story window and a similar design with a central cartouche rests above it. The fourth and fifth windows, being double and triple respectively, rise to the belvederes, which actually function as the covered end pavilions to a U-shaped balustraded terrace. Roman Ionic pilasters frame the Palladian motif openings on all four sides of the two belvederes. The hipped roofs have modillioned cornices, used on all roof treatment seen on this north front.

The three-story wings which complete the facade design continue the rusticated first level and the second and third level window treatment of the towers and central loggia, but on a more subtle vein using some terra cotta decoration between the upper two levels. The two clock towers set back behind these two wings rise above even the eight-story Main Street front. Although there are

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some openings at lower levels, the main treatment is, of course, near the top. Large clock facings front on all four sides between the wide end pilasters. Above this a massive modillioned cornice supports the balustrading from which the upper two levels of the tower rise. The lower rectangular windows are just under the balustrading for the large arched openings, framed at the corner by Roman Ionic columns. From this square base rises the ribbed, four-sectioned dome topped by a finial. Here, more than any other single design concept in the hotel, can be seen the Spanish Renaissance trademark of Carrere and Hastings, the tower supposedly being inspired by the Giralda tower on the Cathedral of Seville. The use of similar openings, orders and scale at least within the detailing, cause these high clock towers to blend with the rest of the Franklin Street facade.

- b. South (main street) facade: This eight-story front, broken into two three-bay fronts on the upper levels due to the U-shape of the southern two-thirds of the hotel, is much less distinguished than the 1895 part and bears a common relationship with the many other Roman Renaissance hotels in America of the early-twentieth century. The first two stories develop the theme, seen in a more satisfying system on the north front, of a rusticated first level with oversized arched windows and fluted Corinthian pilasters on the second level. This motif is carried out for three-bays around the corner on the west front. The center three arched bays in front of the recess are framed by a two-story engaged tetra-style Roman Doric portico with a paneled parapet wall and central cartouche above. This same classical feeling is carried out in the 1907 Engineers Club and ballroom addition to the east of the main hotel block, which also has a rusticated basement, but with the engaged portico confined to the second-story arched windows. The upper stories of the main hotel are plain with a double rowlock brick lintel over the windows. The top story, above a narrow frieze, has squat attic windows and a heavy cornice supported by double modillions, having had the paired pilasters between the windows removed.
- c. West (Jefferson Street) facade: Originally designed for the loading and unloading of travelers' baggage, this side street front now serves mainly as a subordinate entranceway to the hotel and to the Colony Club in the basement. Eight bays, starting at Franklin Street and going south, are part of the original design but are in the restrained spirit of the end wings of the north front. Beginning at the end of this section and for several bays south is the old Carriage entrance projection which is still retained in shape, but the

design is of the 1907 rebuilding. This projection with rounded ends is continued up to the roof cornice. The rounded ends, which originally functioned as an arched entrance and exit for the carriages, have been filled in as a window on the south end, and the north one is used as a truck loading area.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Upper area: The upper area of the Jefferson on Franklin Street was not destroyed by fire but apparently has been altered somewhat over the years, especially when the Rotunda Club leased this section on the ground level in 1957. The Marble Hall, now a rather narrow cross hall reached through a vestibule on entering from the street, originally was much broader, but rooms have been created by filling in between the rows of marble piers along the molded beams which criss-cross the ceiling. The walls themselves are covered with imitation marble plaster blocks, but the floors are marble. The hall runs east-west along the north side of the Palm Court, a two-story open room whose center of focus is Edward Valentine's magnificent statue of Mr. Jefferson. Twin Roman Ionic columns surround the rectangular room and support a decorated entablature and second-level arcade of window lights and skylight above. The columns frame the wide doorways leading to a large sitting room on the east and the blocked doorways which formerly led to the small parlors on the west, the hallway addition leading to the club from the lower Rotunda lobby having eliminated those. On the north and south ends of the Palm Court the columns screen one-story recesses. The east sitting room walls have pilasters between broad window openings and beams ornamented with dentils and modillions cross the room. The "Grand Salon" to the north and occupying the northeast corner of the hotel is richly decorated in an 1890's version of "Louis XVI" style. Unfluted Roman Ionic columns set on pedestals have been placed in the four corners of the rectangular room and alongside the two entrances on the west wall. They support an entablature which projects to meet each column; a heavily decorated modillioned cornice projects completely around the ceiling and the soffit has deep coffering with gilded rosettes in the centers. A chair rail divides the raised panels in the dado from the large plain surfaces framed by strip moldings above. These panels and the windows are surmounted by broad gilded shell motifs. The rather plain mantel is topped by a large mirror with raised leaf patterns at either side and a large decorated panel above. The small rooms which range along the Franklin Street front between it and the Marble Hall serve as parlors and offices for the Rotunda Club. The double parlor at the east end of this range of rooms is in the Rococo style expressed particularly in the carved marble mantel, but the parlor at the west end,



which appears to have some alterations in the doorways, is 90. in the French Renaissance style.

2. Lower area: The Rotunda dominates the southern half of the structure to which everything on the surrounding two levels is oriented. The Rotunda and the Palm Room of the Rotunda Club form a north-south axis which was weakened with the closing up of the entranceway between them. The broad staircase leading to the mezzanine on the north end of the Rotunda does, however, establish a strong visual axis down the lobby itself. The Rotunda is dominated by the double tiers of mammoth columns covered with paper in imitation marble which support a painted tray ceiling of leaf clusters set in red panels. A large rectangular inset in the center of the ceiling marks the old skylight, which has been filled in. The first-level columns utilize gilt swags on a background of gold rings of varying texture to from a capping typical of the originality of the period. The mezzanine-level columns have a gilded composite order capping with flower swags below. The entablature combines a standard architrave with a frieze of squares alternating with long decorated rectangular panels, and a heavy modillioned cornice above. Most of the walls on the first and mezzanine levels facing the court give the paneled effect by the use of strip moldings in some form. The second south wall is dominated by a series of five arches which mark the northern boundaries of the Empire Room.

A range of hotel offices, luncheon counter, dining room and elevators surrounds the ground level of the Rotunda; but the mezzanine is flanked by the kitchen on the east, the Empire and Flemish Rooms on the south, and the stair, the Washington and the Monticello Rooms running south to north, respectively, along the west wall. These are, of course, the work of the 1907 rebuilding. Carrying out the heavy classicism of the Rotunda itself is the large banquet and meeting room called the Washington Room. As in the Marble Hall and Grand Salon of the upper end, broad beams criss-cross the room being supported at the intersections by gilded Roman Ionic columns with swags and corresponding pilasters along the walls. The green and gold painted room is well-lighted by the row of arched windows on the south, which match the ones seen from the Rotunda lobby on the north, and has a wood parquet floor.

The smaller Flemish Room is handsomely paneled in walnut almost two-thirds of the way up to the high exposed beam ceiling. Cross beams are supported by square posts whose vertical panels are in two sections divided two-thirds of the way up by medallions with carved rosettes. Half sections of these rosettes appear at the base of the shafts.

The Washington Room on the west range of the mezzanine has a more refined classical image with its low paneled dado, chair rail above and narrow strip moldings defining the broad wall surface above. A narrow band of gold painted carving separates the main wall surface from a cove frieze with a rather simple roll molding cornice. The marble mantel with its architrave framing and central rose-filled urn panel above supports a large framed mirror on the overmantel.

Special note should be given to a small room just east of the Washington Room, whose original function is unknown. The high dado, with its Queen Anne feeling portrayed in tall rectangular panels topped by narrow ones, surrounds the room interrupted by the arch of the Main Street front, east front and the blind arch on the north wall. Within the latter has been placed a doorway with a shield above and from this central motif pours carved fruit of every type which runs along the top and continues halfway down the sides. The unusual character of this room is unfortunately rarely seen by the hotel guest.

The Engineers Club occupies the first level on the Main Street wing, but the stair hall and the ballroom on the second level are open to the public. The large stair which leads from the ground level outside entrance up to the ballroom and gallery carries out the design to which practically every stair design in the hotel adheres. The rhythmical pattern of curved end rectangles placed closely together lightens the effect that such broad stairs might create. Here, a dark slate was used on the treaders, but usually white marble was used in other parts of the hotel. Also, as in most of the other stairs, the basic structure is of iron. The ballroom is a heavily decorated room with hardwood floor, tray ceiling with gilded lattice pattern in the cove, molded convex surrounds in a large circle on the ceiling and as a frame for the stage on the north end. Four blind arches run along the east and west walls and a balcony is set on the south wall.

The three hundred and thirty guest rooms vary a great deal but most of them have either been altered or were never of any architectural consequence. Significant, however, are the suites which have sitting rooms, for their mantels and paneling expresses on a small scale the spirit of the Grand Salon and Washington Rooms. Also some "step up" baths have early-twentieth century fixtures. A program of renovation has been started which has considerably brightened the rooms but which has removed most of the original fixtures.

3. Notable hardware: Some significant hardware remains in the form of tall cast-iron light supports at the Franklin

Street entrance, on the mezzanine in the Rotunda and in the variety of wall lights found in both the upper and lower sections of the hotel. The fascinating assortment of door knobs and locks is especially amazing; some idea of the detailing which went into the early designs and additions of the hotel can be seen in the brass lock showing a profile of Mr. Jefferson in relief with his initials below on a classically simple lock and knob.

4. Heating: Boilers in the low brick extension on the east front provide hot water for radiators. Air conditioning varies from a chilled water cooling system to single unit room air conditioners.
5. Lighting: Electric lighting: in the Rotunda lobby, indirect ceiling light is combined with wall and floor lights, some of which have been adopted from original gas lights. The upper area in the Rotunda Club uses chandeliers and wall electric lights.

Prepared by Tucker H. Hill  
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Virginia Historic  
Landmarks Commission  
May 12, 1969

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the Richmond Photo-Data Project, undertaken in 1967 by HABS in cooperation with the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission. During the period from July, 1967 to October, 1969, records were made of 11 historic structures in Richmond. The project primarily recorded examples of the cast-iron commercial architecture for which the city is known, though other building types are also included.

The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief, Historic American Buildings Survey. James W. Moody, Jr., Executive Director, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission, directed the operation in Richmond. Professor Paul Delaney of the University of Virginia School of Architecture assisted in the selection of subjects covered. Historical and architectural data were furnished by Messrs. Tucker Hill and Calder Loth, Architectural Historians of the Commission's staff. Photographer was Edward F. Heite, also on the staff of the Commission.